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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 100790

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/17/2018

TAGS: [NATO](#) [PREL](#) [GG](#) [RS](#)

SUBJECT: SEEKING ALLIED SUPPORT FOR NO BUSINESS AS USUAL IN THE
NRC

REF: STATE 90980

Classified By: Classified by A/S Dan Fried for reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request, see paragraph 4.

[1](#)2. (U) On August 19, NATO Foreign Ministers agreed that there can be "no business as usual" in the NATO-Russia relationship, following Russia's brutal military action in Georgia, and Russia's subsequent recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Although Russia has complied with the first deadline of the September 8 agreement by withdrawing its forces from the Senaki-Poti line, it has also announced it will keep 3,800 troops in each separatist region. Such a stationing/deployment would constitute a further violation of the August 12 ceasefire agreement brokered by French President Sarkozy, which requires Russia to withdraw its forces to their positions prior to the outbreak of hostilities on August 7.

[1](#)3. (C) In light of Russia's failure to meet its commitments under the August 12 and September 8 ceasefire agreements, the U.S. strongly believes that NATO Allies should not agree at this time to resume regular meetings in the NATO Russia Council (NRC), nor in the regular meetings of the Preparatory Committee devoted to preparing such Ambassadorial-level meetings. We understand that, while NATO Allies generally share our view on the necessity of suspending NRC Ambassadorial meetings until Russia has fully implemented the August 12 ceasefire agreement, some Allies favor continuing the bi-monthly Preparatory Committee meeting (Prep Com), not least because they believe this is "mandated" by NRC rules of procedure. We reject that logic, given our view that the Prep Com exists only in connection with, and not independent of, the NRC Ambassadorial Forum. For the interim, the U.S. supports the view, shared by other Allies, that ad hoc working-level meetings in the NRC framework should continue only on issues that are removed from events in Georgia and remain in the Alliance's long-term strategic interest, such as counterterrorism, counternarcotics, and ISAF cooperation in Afghanistan.

[1](#)4. (SBU) In anticipation of the September 23 informal PermRep lunch, where future NRC PrepCom meetings will be discussed, Posts are requested to approach host government officials to urge postponing the consideration of any future Prep Com meetings at least until after the October 15 Geneva Conference, which will include a review of Russia's implementation and compliance with the ceasefire and subsequent agreements. Posts should draw on the following points:

-- In response to Russia's brutal military action in Georgia,

NATO Foreign Ministers agreed on August 19 that there can be "no business as usual" in the NATO-Russia relationship. Since that date, Russia has gone even further, having decided to recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states and to establish diplomatic relations with these two regions.

-- Under these circumstances, where Russia has refused to meet its obligations laid out in the August 12 ceasefire agreement, recognized South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and now announced that it intends to keep 3,800 troops in each separatist region, we believe it is premature to schedule any future Prep Coms at this time.

-- The U.S. believes strongly that scheduling a Prep Com meeting at this time would signal to Russia that the NATO-Russia relationship is moving back towards normalization, when in fact Russia has continued to take actions that destabilize the South Caucasus region and violate the principles of international law. On September 17, Russian President Medvedev signed Treaties of Friendship and Cooperation with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, providing for Russia to build military bases in the breakaway republics, among other provisions. Earlier this week, Russia blocked deployment of the OSCE Military Monitoring Officers (MMOs) by insisting on modalities that would have limited the MMOs to areas outside South Ossetia. The Finnish Chairmanship in Office of the OSCE has wisely broken off negotiations rather than acquiesce to Russia's unwarranted interpretation of its

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ceasefire commitments.

-- Now is not the moment for NATO to resume Prep Com meetings with Russia. We should use every lever to ensure Russia fully implements its obligations under the August 12 and September 8 ceasefire agreements and underscore to Russia that there is no business as usual at NATO. We believe strongly it would be premature to resume Prep Com meetings. We should not even begin to discuss the possibility of a Prep Com meeting until after the October 15 Geneva Conference, when we can assess the record of Russia's implementation of its ceasefire commitments.

-- As the Secretary stated in her speech on September 18, since the end of the Cold War, the NATO Allies have worked to transform NATO into a means for nurturing the growth of a Europe whole, free and at peace. We recognize that "no business as usual" does not necessarily mean no business and that the NATO-Russia relationship was aimed at addressing security threats that affect Allies and Russia alike. Cooperation is appropriate in non-Georgia-related areas of long-term strategic importance such as counterterrorism, proliferation of WMD, counternarcotics, and cooperation on Afghanistan. For that reason, we agree with other Allies that cooperation in these areas should continue including if necessary at levels of the NATO-Russia Council below the Ambassadorial/PrepCom levels.

-- While rules of procedure are important, in the end they must be subordinate to the wider political purpose of the forum they are designed to serve. We must take account of the fact that Russia has contravened the fundamental basic principles of the NATO-Russia relationship, as elaborated in the NATO-Russia Founding Act. The Founding Act affirms the importance of respecting the territorial integrity of all states, rejects dividing lines or spheres of influence that would have the effect of limiting the sovereignty of another state, and recognizes the inherent rights of each state to choose the means by which it ensures its own security.

-- Russia's actions in Georgia have violated these core principles. Russian President Medvedev has publicly announced Russia's "privileged interests" in regions of its near abroad as a key principle of Russian foreign policy. Medvedev's statement contradicts the Founding Act and the assumptions and principles that undergird it, and should be viewed as a fundamental shift in Russia's attitude toward its relationship with NATO.

15. (U) Posts are requested to report host government responses

no later than Monday, September 22. Cables should be slugged
for EUR/RPM NATO/Russia Desk Officer Leslie Hayden.
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